




PATA-PAINTINGS OF ORISSA



B. MOHANTY



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This little piece of work is humbly dedicated
at the Lotus Feet of Lord Jagannath.

Author





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Deepavali
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B.MOHANTY





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Historical Glimpses of Orissan Folk Art

ORISSA is famous for its art and architecture. Though the folk-painting of Orissa has a rich heritage, the painters are almost unknown outside India. Like Orissan art and architecture, Orissan folk-painting has its special characteristics also. To distinguish it from others, we may call it 'Odisi Painting'. Looking back, one may point out to the rural paintings of palaeolithic age in Guahandi hills in Kalahandi district of Western Orissa, and the pictographic writings in Bikram Khol in Sambalpur, Ulapgarh and Manikmunda in Sundergarh, and Jogimath in Kalahandi.

Sisupalgarh near Bhubaneswar is a store-house of terracottas. Many decorative pieces of ornaments especially of the ear and nose, have been found here. Recently a terracotta seal with the figure of a lion and a bow, which is supposed to be a military seal, a fine specimen of folk-art, has been excavated. These are traced back to Kharavela, the great Oriya emperor of the first century B. C. Similarly, the earliest evidences of Jain art and architecture, also belonging to Kharavela's time, could be seen in the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri near Bhubaneswar, which have some remarkable expositions of the secluded life of Kharavela and his queens. The celebrated designs of flowers and foliage, the dancing maidens, the elephants, and the Jaina Puranic episodes along with faded fresco paintings in some caves provide the artistic and architectural history of Orissa. Another bright specimen of ancient Orissan painting could be seen on the boulders known as *Ravana Chchhaya* in Keonjhar district. Dr. C. Sivaramamurti, a renowned archaeologist and a consummate art-critic, offers an illuminating description of Orissan paintings in his book 'Indian Paintings' published by National Book Trust, India:

"The paintings at Sitabhinji in the Keonjhar district represent the early phase of painting in Orissa during the time of Bhanja's. In fact, one of the boulders, known as *Ravana Chchhaya*, has a painting on the smooth-cut underside forming the ceiling of the roof. The painting has been very much damaged by weather, but what remains, though a small area of 17' x 10', presents a royal procession with an inscription painted below mentioning Maharaja Sri Disa Bhanja. It is thus clear that the painting is of the time of the Kalinga King of that name of the Bhanja dynasty. The letters are of about the 8th Century A.D. and the painting may be referred to that period. It, therefore, represents a continuation of the Gupta tradition in Orissa and is almost contemporary with the Parasurameswar Temple at Bhubaneswar.

"The procession shows a king on an elephant with the umbrella held over him, cavaliers and foot soldiers proceeding and following the stately animal. It closely follows the Bagh representation though it is not so beautiful. This is the earliest painting found in Orissa and has to be recognised as one of the early schools of painting in India".

The art and architecture in Orissa reached its zenith during the period between 11th Century and 15th Century. This is exactly the time when magnificent temples at Puri, Bhubaneswar, Khiching and Konarak were constructed. Sri Jagannath Temple has always been the centre of Orissan culture. *Madala Panji*, or the Chronicles of Sri Jagannath Temple mention that during the time of Narasinha Deva, *chitrakaras* or painters were employed for painting the Jagannath Temple at Puri. As the famous Chronicle states, it is exactly during the reign of Mahaliya Mukunda Deva that art found expression on the walls of the *Jagamohan* of the Laxmi Temple, as also on the *Jhulan Mandap* and the Gundicha Temple at Puri. The paintings which depict the Kanchi expedition of Purusottam Deva (1467-1497) are of rare beauty and these drawings adorn the walls of Sri Jagannath Temple. These are considered as among the old paintings but due to repeated application of paints, they have lost their original colour. It was an age-old custom of the *chitrakaras* to offer beautiful handicrafts as gifts to the Rajas and the Zamindars on the auspicious day of *Sunia* festival. In return, they received rewards from the Rajas. The artisans' gifts included *pata chitras*, illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts, horn, ivory and wooden icons, carved images of stone and filigree works. Local weavers used to present embroidered works on silk, canvas and carpets.

The artisans do not belong to any particular place though Puri has the largest concentration. Normally they are scattered throughout the state. They paint the *patas*, the walls and the images. Often, they prepare manuscripts of finely coloured palm leaves. Many of the palm-leaf paintings could be found in the *Bhagavat Gharas* or *Gadis* where the Oriya *Bhagavat* of Jagannath Das of 16th Century is worshipped along with varieties of other manuscripts. Such palm-leaf manuscripts are found in large numbers in many Oriya households because paper as a writing material was not in vogue until the 18th century. Art on palm leaves was a popular traditional art and many mythological epics such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Haribansh* and poetical works like *Sri Gita Govinda*, *Vaidehisavilas*, *Rasakallol*, *Raslila*, *Lavanyavati*, etc. as well as many tantric and architectural documents were profusely and dexterously illustrated in colour. The profound influence of the Moghul School of painting and the Jain miniatures on this art is clearly seen in the palm-leaf manuscript paintings of the 17th. and 18th. Century A.D.

In this connexion the clarifying remark of Dr. M. Krasa of Praha on the folk-art of Orissa is worth mentioning—"Among all the known sorts of Indian folk painting the pictures done by the folk-artists from Orissa are outstanding, arising from their entirely different character defined by its long uninterrupted tradition and by their distinctive creative sources as well as

by their specific expression". Professor O. C. Gangooly, one of the few Indian art historians who devoted at least some attention to the Orissa folk-painting, claims that they are not only unique in the history of Indian painting but are unparalleled in the history of any form of European painting—"By virtue of their strange and fantastic pictorial concepts, and their deliberately wayward colour schemes almost confined to three or four tones of bright primitive tints, they stay quite by themselves and bear affinity to any other school of painting either in or outside India".

The folk-art in Orissa is varied in expression and has a specific beauty of its own. The portraits of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, the deities are usually drawn on the floor in black, white and yellow colours. Curiously enough, these colours are prepared from indigenous items like charcoal, rice and tamarind powder. Such picturization could be seen during the *Rasa Purnima* festival held in November. Many other designs of folk-paintings are also drawn on the inner and outer walls of the houses specially during Dasahara, Laxmipuja and *Kalipuja* festivals. Different forms depicting lotus flowers, paddy leaves bearing bunches of paddy grains, foot-prints of the goddess Laxmi, fishes, decorated marriage pandals and bride and bridegroom in a palanquin—these are among the other pictures on the walls. Also, pictures depicting Sri Jagannath Temple with the divine-triad of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra and the drawings depicting the various episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are very interesting. Bullocks and ploughs and ploughmen in cow-worship festivals also indicate some of the important motifs of folk-art in Orissa.

In modern Oriya folk-paintings, the artists draw the pictures of Laxmi, Ganesh, Saraswati, etc. and the folk-goddess Bhalukuni. Craftsmen build images of Kali, Durga, Ganesh, Saraswati and other gods and goddesses in clay and colour them with multiple colours .. These artistic performances are praiseworthy. They are, however, considered to be the influence of the neighbouring Bengali tradition. A few years ago the Bengal tradition mainly flourished in places like Puri, Cuttack and Balasore where earthen images of the goddess Durga and Kali were prepared.

But the traditional folk-art exhibited during the Ganesh and Saraswati Puja is quite simple and deserves mention. The village *chitrakara* brings a ripe coconut and peels it off. He then polishes the surface and apply clay-stone colour on it. After that he paints the figures of Ganesh and Saraswati in multiple colours. The painted coconut is thus decorated with flower sticks and worshipped as god or goddess. Sometimes figures of Ganesh, Saraswati, Laxmi, Siva, Durga, Bhairavi and other gods and goddesses are painted in *pata* and worshipped with customary rituals.

During the *Rekha Panchami* festival in August, the folk artists portray the figures of Ekapada Bhairava, Ganesh and Siva on the front and back doors of the houses in order to

ward off the evil spirit. The figures are line drawings only without application of any colour. It is a common sight in the Brahmin families in Puri district.

The art and drawing materials of the chitrakaras of Orissa are of a specific type. They are made of wood and burnt clay. Beautiful idols, puppets, and masks of king and queen and animals like lion, tiger, elephant and horse are made by the folk-artisans. Puppets which show the *Gopa Leela and Sakhi* (the dancing girl) are also of this type.

Both the modern and traditional art have played important roles in the drama of Orissa folk-painting. The history of Orissan Art is a fascinating chronicle. Remarkable treasures of folk painting are still to be found in the dilapidated *mathas* and temples, dark chambers in the houses of ex-rulers and zamindars, *Bhagavat Gadis* and in the poverty-stricken slums of the folk-painters, village astrologers and sculptors. Many of these treasures can also be traced to some reputed families of Orissa. Serious efforts should be made for the proper preservation of these invaluable treasures of art before they are perished and fall into oblivion. A scientific and devoted research should also be made for the revival and writing of a meaningful history of the art and architecture of Orissa.



Pata-Paintings of Orissa

PATA is a Sanskrit derivation which means canvas, and *chitra* means picture. So, *pata-chitra* or *pata*-painting means a scroll painting on canvas. These forms are different from the coloured illustrations on the palm-leaf manuscripts as well as from the rural folk-paintings. The exact beginning of these *pata-chitras* cannot be determined but they have been existing in various parts of Orissa for a long time.

In one form these paintings are related to Sri Jagannath of Puri in the sense that the *pata-chitras* have mainly the designs of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, the three deities. Thus the history of *pata*-paintings can be associated with the history of Sri Jagannath, which as the scholars point out, has a pre-Aryan, tribal origin. The totem-like appearance of Sri Jagannath, as it is represented on iconographic paintings, is a pointer to this direction. At the same time it should be noted that the relationship of *pata*-painters and *pata*-paintings with Sri Jagannath is more than structural and is associated with worship and rituals.

Generally, the *Nava Kalevara* (Making of the New Body) ceremony of the Lord is observed once in every 12 years and Puri is crowded with millions of pilgrims and tourists on this occasion. The wooden image of the Lord is prepared secretly in a closed and secluded room. After its completion the *chitrakaras* (artists) cover the wooden idol with ropes and affix the *Sri Kapada* (holy cloth) over the ropes. The gum used to fix the cloth is a kind of paste prepared by cooking resin, camphor and *guggula* (perfumed sticky extract of a tree) in fire which smells nice, and pasting the cloth with this *Khadilagi* (the gum made of soft clay stone) is thus finished. The *chitrakars* consider the *Daru* (the wood) as bone, the *Aswalagi* (paste) as flesh and the *Sri Kapada* (new cloth) as skin. Besides, the colours signify the colours of the body. After the colouring of the statue of Lord Jagannath is over, Brahma (soul) or *Atman* is inserted into it in a secret worship. The 'Trinity' (Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra) of the Temple is coloured several times a year as the colours are washed off by the water used in the Pujas. The *chitrakaras* of Jagannath Temple are also appointed for colouring the deities on the three chariots every year. Different *chitrakara* families have been exclusively employed for this purpose. Eighteen families for the *Nandi Ghosh* chariot of Lord Jagannath, 14 families for the chariot of Balabhadra and 6 families for that of Subhadra. The Colouring of the Holy 'Trinity' is called '*Banaka Lagi*'. The word *Banaka* is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Varna*' meaning colour.

For colouring the statues with clay pencils (*Khadi*) a separate festival is observed which is known as *Khadilagi Amabasya*. Apart from the *Nava Kalebara* ritual, Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are repainted on different auspicious days of the lunar cycle like *trayodasi* (13th day) and *chaturdasi* (14th day). The materials used in painting the 'Trinity' are as follows :- *Sankha* (conch-shell) *Kasturi* (musk), *Kesara* (saffron), *Haritala* (yellow arsenic), *Hingula* (red ochre) and the gum of *Kaitha* (*Feromia Elephantum*).

It is obvious that the techniques of the *pata art* originated from the art of painting the 'Trinity'.

Every year, after the *Snanotsav* (Bathing Ceremony) of the Lord, the deity resides in a secluded chamber called *Anasara Ghar* till the *Ratha Yatra* or Car Festival. According to the custom, the successors of Viswawas Savar, the first tribal chief of the legend who began the worship of the Lord, make secret worships to the deities in this chamber by offering fruits and coconuts. Meanwhile the 'Trinity' i.e. Nilamadhava or Narayana (Jagannath), Ananta (Balaram) and Bhuvaneshwari (Subhadra) represented in three different *pata-chitras* prepared by the folk-artists of the Temple are worshipped. The *Anasara Pati* of Dadhi Vamana or Nilamadhava temples of Orissa where only one image of Sri Jagannath is installed is named as Nilamadhav or *Dadhivamana Pati*. The pictures of the divine 'Triad' are popularly known as *Srikhetra-Pati* or *Sri Jagannath Pati*. The presentation of the 'Trinity' in these three painted *patas* by the folk-artists is the originating source of *pata*-paintings in Orissa. In many other Jagannath temples in Orissa this custom is given weightage by the folk artists, which is a pure imitation of *Anasara Pati* of the main Jagannath Temple at Puri. The ex-feudal chiefs of Orissa constructed Jagannath temples in their states and observed most of the principles and rituals of the main Temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri. These chiefs and zamindars employed folk-painters by granting *jagirs* to them in their respective states and patronised the traditional paintings. Apart from picturing *Sri Jagannath Patis*, they used to paint the walls of the holy temples, palaces, houses and also the chariots during the Car Festival in traditional colours.

There are nearly 120 different *niyogas* (services) for the smooth running of the Temple at Puri. In the famous Chronicle of the Temple (*Madala Panji*), the records indicate that from the time of Narasinha Deva IV (14th. Century A.D.) *chitrakaras* have been appointed for painting the Temple. But prior to Narasinha Deva, the idols were used to be painted by the same folk-artists although no recorded evidence could be obtained so far. Descriptions on *chitrakara niyoga* could be found in a manuscript entitled *Karmangi* (services of different *Sevayat Niyogas* of the Temple). Puri was invaded many a time by enemies but the invasion of Suleiman Karrani in 1567 A.D. when Kalapahad launched an attack on the Jagannath Temple as well as other temples in Orissa, and destroyed their valuable architectural settings, was probably most devastating. But before Kalapahad's raid on the Temple, its doors were

closed and the *Brahma* or Soul of the Lord was secretly taken to Kujang where the Raja worshipped the Lord. Rama Chandra Deva, the Gajapati king of Puri, decided to rehabilitate the deities of the Temple. He got prepared new idols of the 'Triad' and brought back the soul of the Lord (*Brahma*) from Kujang. As the king revived the worship of the Lord at Puri he ordered the local folk-painters to join their duties and directed them to paint the chariots and the boats during festivals of the *Ratha Yatra* and *Chandan Yatra* respectively. They were also requested to present *Kandarpa Pati* (*pata-chitras* with sexual implications), *Dasavatara Pati* (the ten incarnations of Vishnu) and also colour the gods and goddesses of the Temple. After the Lord retires to the 'Chamber' (*Anasara Ghar*) for rest, they supply Vasudev, Narayan and, Mahalaxmi *pata-chitras* to the Temple worship. In the *Rekha-Panchami* festival, the employed artists are required to decorate the different parts and corners of the Temple including the kitchen room of Laxmi with paintings. The different *Veshas* (decorations) of the Lord are portrayed by them. For all such services, the artists are given remunerations.

Kandarpa Rath has certain significance which may be mentioned here. Sri Jagannath is considered as *Nara-Narayana* and hence he is subject to the forces of *Chaturbarga* that is, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Hence for his physical gratification *pata-chitras* carrying erotic delineations are gifted to him. These amorous portrayals are also seen in the art, architecture and ancient literature of Orissa. Sri Jagannath is believed as Vishnu of Vaikuntha, and from Him we have the ten incarnations. He is the source of all *Avataras*. He is the supreme force as the Lord of the Universe. Jaydev in his *Dasavatara* hymn, in *Sri Gita Govinda* (12th. century) prayed to the Lord addressing Him as 'Jagadish' and affirms that Lord Jagannath appears in all the incarnations on earth. *Sri Gita Govinda* is read and adored in almost every village of Orissa and numerous coloured paintings of *Sri Gita Govinda* in palm-leaf manuscripts and *pata-chitras* are to be found in many villages. Various fables relating to Sri Jaydev and Sri Jagannath and the *Dasavatara* poems of Sri Jaydev are recited in and around the Temple of the Lord. *Dasavatara pata*-paintings are also offered to the Lord with such recitation.

Pata-Painting Centres

From ancient times, Puri has been the only centre of *pata*-paintings which focussed Lord Jagannath. But gradually this traditional preoccupation spread to other parts of the state from Puri. As already mentioned, this painting of Sri Jagannath is popularly known as *Srikhetra Pati*. The *chitrakaras* like the other *Sevayats* reside in the vicinity of the temple and their lane is known as *Chitrakara Sahi*. In course of time some *chitrakara* families left the colony.

Raghurajpur, a village 8 km. away from Puri town, has now become the centre of *pata*-painting in Orissa. There are other folk artists who are efficient in this profession and

who reside in the distant villages of Puri district. Some of the noted villages are, Danda Sahi at Chandanpur, Pratapapur, Itamati, Nayagarh, Dasapalla, Bankatara near Oda Gaon, Karada Gadia near Hatakeswar, Haladia Gada and Champatipur. Besides, the following groups of villages may be mentioned which have recently come up as the centres of *pata*-painting.

1. Manpur, Subarnpur, Raj Athagarh, Gangadhar Prasad and Dinabandhupur near Dhenkanal town in the Dhenkanal district.

2. Mathura, Parlakhemundi and Jeypur in the Ganjam District. Particularly the Chitrakara Sahi of Parlakhemundi is a centre of *pata*-painting in South Orissa. One can also find reputed folk-painters residing at Raygada, Chikiti, Surangi, Berhampur, Bada Khemundi, Sana Khemundi. Dharakota, Polsara and Balipadar in the district of Ganjam.

3. In the Western region of Orissa, Champamal (of Sonepur) is highly reputed for *pata*-painting. The *Ramayana Ganjpa* cards prepared by the Champamal artists are generally considered to be superior in artistry to other *Ganjpa* cards produced elsewhere in Orissa. The *pata*-paintings of Champamal are so famous that it has now become a centre of these paintings. They supply *patas* specially to Sambalpur, Sonepur, Bolangir and Kalahandi areas.

Surnames of Pata-painters

The *chitrakaras* or artists of Orissa are Sudra by caste. The surnames they use are *Maharana*, *Mahapatra*, *Das*, *Subudhi*, *Bindhani*, *Paikaroy* and *Dattamahapatra* etc. Dattamahapatras of Puri trace their origin to the Savar tribe who are connected with the colouring (*Banaka lagi*) of Sri Jagannath of Puri. It may be noted that almost all the members of the *chitrakara* family help the artist in preparing the portraits. Women and children generally engage themselves in making the paste and colour. The artist draws the sketches and finally gives a finishing touch to the work.

The Pata-Paintings of Puri

The traditional folk artists at Puri are mainly engaged in making the *Yatri-Pati* or *Jagannath Pati* and painting the walls of the surrounding mathas and temples. Apart from supplying the *Anasara Pati* to the main Temple they paint the interiors of the Temple walls. They also include in this task the chariots, the *Dala Mandap*, the *Chandan Mandap*, *Gundicha Ghar*, etc. They also supply *Nrushimha Pata* on the birthday of Lord *Nrushimha*, *Durga Pata* during *Durga Puja*, *Kali Pata* in *Kali Puja* *Laxmi Pata* on *Laxmi Puja* day and so on. Pata-painters of Puri have got wider market for their folk paintings as it is a great centre of pilgrimage in Eastern India. Large numbers of *pata*-paintings are sold in shops and on footpaths of Puri town.

Pata-Painters of Parlakhemundi

There are about fifteen families of the traditional *Pata*-painters in Parlakhemundi which is a small town in the district of Ganjam in the south of Orissa. The descendants of the Royal House belong to the Gajapati family of Puri and they have settled there for a long time. In imitation of Puri Temple, they supply *Anasar Pata-Chitras* to the Jagannath Temple at Parlakhemundi.

The *pata*-painters of Parlakhemundi make *Ganjpa* playing cards in their own style. They also prepare a specific type of *Dasavatara Ganjpa* cards bearing the forms of the ten incarnations of God Vishnu. One more artistic production is *Parasuram Handi* (Parasuram Pot). A piece of cloth is pasted over an earthen pot and after colouring it with soft-stone colour the incarnations are sketched in different colours. Generally it is seen as the begging bowl of Parasuram who is among the ten *Avataras*. In ordinary playing cards, eight different colours are used where each colour is applied to twelve cards and thus the total number comes to ninety six. In each series of the twelve cards the numerical figures are shown from one to ten in the form of pictures. The eleventh and twelfth cards bear the pictures of the minister and the king. In southern parts of Orissa, the two types of colours *Pita Rang* and *Nakas* are very popular. In *Dasavatar Ganjpa* cards, twelve cards are used for each incarnation. Hence the total number comes to 120. The eleventh and the twelfth depict a new incarnation and the king respectively.

Types of Orissa Pata-Paintings

There are remarkable varieties of *pata*-paintings which need elaboration. They are given below with a possible categorisation.

- (a) *Sri Jagannath Pati*.
- (b) *Pata-chitra* based on different episodes of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavat and other Puranas and *Kavyas*.
- (c) *Pata-chitra* on Orissa folk-*lores*.
- (d) *Pata-chitra* on the ritual art of the *bratas* and modes of worshipping the gods and goddesses of Orissa.
- (e) *Pata-chitra* on different animals and birds,
- (f) *Erotic Pata-chitras*.

Sri Jagannath Pati—This particular type of *pata* mainly centres round Sri Jagannath and the holy 'Triad'; Sri Jagannath on chariot, the 'Triad' in the Temple and the 'Triad' in *Anasara Ghar*. The eighteen decorations (*vesas*) of the Lord are:

Gajanan Vesa (Elephant faced Jagannath).

Suna Vesa (Golden Form).

Bana Bhoji Vesa (picnic).

Kaliya Dalan Vesa (Jagannath mounting on the head of the snake *Kaliya*).

Krishna Balaram Vesa (Dress of Krishna and Balaram).

Raja Vesa (The King's dress).

Sri Radha Damodar Vesa (The Dress of Sri Radha and Damodar i.e, Krishna).

Thia Kia Vesa (The decoration with *Keya* flower).

Banka-Chuda Vesa (The decoration with a twisted hair-do).

Raj Rajeswara Vesa (The dress of a Supreme King).

Padma Vesa (The lotus dress of Sri Jagannath).

Gaja Udharan Vesa (The decoration as the rescuer of Elephant).

The second category depicts (*Rasalila*, *Rama Ravan Yudha*, *Bastra Harana*, Krishna playing on the flute, the slaying of Kamsa, Aghasur, Pralambasur, Dhenu-kasura, Krishna with Radha, Krishna with *Asta Sakhi* (eight damsels), Rama, Laxman and Sita, Hanuman burning Lanka, Rama killing the demon Ravana, Viswarupa of Lord Krishna. These are some of the more popular depictions which are of life-size and of course a creation of beauty. All these picturisations are ample evidence of the keen sensibility and the sharp perceptibility of an artistic mind.

The third category includes *Tapoi* and the *Goddess Mangala*, *Nava Gunjara Vesa* of Krishna, the Patient and the *Kaviraj* (Malu-Vaidya) etc.

The fourth set includes Durga, Dasa Mahavidya, Chandi, Chamundi, Kali, Bankeswari, Khambeswari, Laxmi, Saraswati, Agnikumari, Chinnamasta, Naga Kanya, Nartaki (a dancing girl in Odissi dance posture) and Apsara, etc. Among the gods are Vishnu, Bhairab, Durga, Madhab, Siva, Parvati, Ganesh, the Ten Incarnations of Lord Vishnu and also Nabagraha, and Parasuram. The next category depicts elephant, peacock, black deer, white monkey, lion, tiger, wolf, camel, *Gaja-Sinha* etc.

The fifth category marks *Kama Kunjara* (Nine damsels arranged in the form-of an elephant), *Kandarpa Rath* (Cupid's chariot-Number of Damsels arranged in the form of a chariot), and sixty four amorous postures.

Preparation of Pata

Painting on silken canvas is an old method. In Orissa, until early 19th century there was no such frequent use of paper. But instances of paintings on cotton cloths can be traced to

Amir Hamzah (A.D. 1550-75) during the reign of Akbar. This is now under preservation in Victoria Albert Museum. Vincent Smith in his book, 'A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon' remarks, "Excepting the Modern Delhi miniatures in ivory, the frescoes, the paintings on cotton, the Indo- Persian Painting are all executed on paper. I do not know any Indian example of painting on silk in the Chinese manner." Kalighat Paintings and Jaran *Patras* are also folk-paintings on cloth but they are entirely different from Orissa *Patras*.

First, the folk-painter chooses two pieces of cloth and he sticks the two pieces together by means of a paste prepared from tamarind seed. They are then dried in the sun.

The seeds of tamarind are first kept in water for two to three days. When the seeds swell and become soft, these are grinded with a pestle-stone until a jelly like substance is formed. In an earthen pot some water is poured along with this substance which is finally heated into a paste. This gum, according to tradition, is called *Niryas Kalpa*. The pieces of cloths thus pasted together into one become a *pati*.

The powder is prepared from a soft-clay stone which is found in abundance throughout Orissa. It is again mixed with the tamarind paste (the proportion being 2:1) and is brushed on the *pati* two to three times by means of a handmade brush. The surface of the *pati* to which the colours have been applied, is then rubbed over with a rounded stone, sea-shell or a piece of smooth wood, and when dried out it is given further finishing treatment. Sometimes the *pati* is an area of some square metres. After the *pati* is dried it is rolled up and from this roll, pieces of *patis* are cut and utilised for the *chitras*.

Preparation of colours

The colours used in folk arts are made from natural ingredients like china-clay, soft-clay or chalk, conch-shell, red-stone, yellow-brown-ochre etc. The black colour is prepared from charcoal powder. For white, the artists use sea-shells which are available in plenty on the sea shores of Orissa. The sea-shells are powdered and the powder is kept in a basin mixed with some water for two days. The mixture is stirred properly until it becomes soft and milky. This milky liquid is then heated with the gum of *Kaitha fruit* (*Feromia Elephantum*). The paste thus prepared is then dried in the sun to form a solid substance.

The women folk of Orissa prepare collyrium by holding an oiled leaf over the smoke of a burning wick. In the same process the black colour is prepared by the artist by using an earthen plate instead of a leaf. The smoke thus collected at the bottom of the plate is thickened to a black substance. This is mixed with the gum of *Kaitha* or *Bilwa* fruit while using as black colour in painting.

The green colour is prepared from the juice of the green leaves which is boiled and proportionately the same gum is mixed. Sometimes special types of green stones are used to prepare green colour. This colour comes out of the mixed proportions of the black and yellow colours (1 : 5).

Red colour is prepared from *hingula* (red ochre) by powdering the stone with the paste-stone. For the yellow colour the *harital* stone (yellow ochre) is grinded with water. The *hingula* and *harital* thus prepared are formed into tablets and dried.

The blue colour is prepared from indigo or a kind of soft-stone called *rajabarta*. The traditional artist uses five main colours in painting the *patas*. These five colours drawn from the natural resources are compared and associated with the divine colours of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sinhasana (The throne) and *Nila-Chakra* (The blue wheel) by the folk painters and saints of Orissa. These are called *Pancha Tatwa* suggesting the five ingredients. Sri Jagannath is also described as *Jyoti Rupi* for the Divine Light which yogis could conceive. These five colours which are but the different manifestations of the *Jyoti*, lastly merge into the divine. The philosophy of the Jagannath Cult has thus been envisaged by the folk artists of Orissa in (connection with) their colour schemes.

Materials used by folk artists

The materials used by the folk painters are of indigenous character. To unite the colours they utilise the wooden bowls made of dried coconut-shell. The coarse brush is prepared from the *keya* root. The hairs of the brush are also collected from the buffalo's neck. Sometimes fine brushes are made from the hairs of the mouse. These brushes are fixed to the wooden handles. They are usually kept in the quivers made out of hollow joint of thick bamboo trees. Sometimes the brushes are stored in leather cases or in dried pumpkin bowls.

Gradually the modern technique has come into play. Plastic and synthetic colours are now being used by the folk artists in Orissa. Just like the Chinese scrolls, modern folk painters are also using only Tassar cloth-pieces for preparing silken *patas*. For giving effect of glaze in their drawings, transparent lacquer is used by some painters. But the traditional artists still use warm cloth packets of sand for polishing the paints.

Revival of Pata-Painting

TRADITIONAL Pata-Painting existed in Orissa long before it came to be known to other parts of the country and abroad in the fifties. In 1952 an American Friends Service Committee started social work at Barpalli in Sambalpur district under the leadership of Philip Zealey. His wife Mrs. Helina Zealey who visited and stayed at Puri took keen interest in the handicrafts of Orissa specially *pata-chitra* which was still then not much known beyond the state. What I gathered from Sri Bhagabat Maharana of Raghurajpur, now a resident of Bhubaneswar, is that Mrs. Helina Zealey visited Chitrakarasahi, Puri, Dandasahi and Raghurajpur very often and used to encourage the *pata-chitrakaras*. She also assured them of a profitable market for their paintings. She sent some of their beautiful paintings to London, New York and Philadelphia and a large number of *pata*-paintings were ordered immediately. Mrs. Helina organised an exhibition of *pata*-painting in 1953 in Puri Town Hall and in 1954 two exhibitions were held in Delhi and Calcutta respectively. In the same year she established the Arts and Crafts Centre at Puri. Sri Nabakrishna Choudhury, the then Chief Minister of Orissa took much interest in reviving this traditional art of Orissa. Soon Orissa Cottage Industries Board took up the cause of marketing of the *pata-chitras* by opening of shops and emporiums.

The Government of Orissa realised the importance of the traditional folk-painting of Orissa which gained admiration of the people of the country and abroad and took positive steps for its development. With the help of the Cooperative Department two Cooperative Societies were started at Bhubaneswar and *Raghurajpur* in the district of Puri. Every year All Orissa *Pata*-Painting Exhibitions are held and the prizes awarded for the best paintings.

Many critics and admirers in and outside the country have been attracted towards this folk-painting and often articles carrying illustrations of *pata*-paintings appear in the periodicals which shed new light on this traditional art of Orissa. Sometime ago the Homi Bhava Trust of India awarded a fellowship to Sri J. P. Das, an Oriya scholar, to work on the *Pata* Paintings of Orissa. This was an encouraging step.

I again quote some illuminating lines of Dr. M. Krasa of Praha who took much interest in Orissa *pata*-paintings-"Strange is this world of the Orissa Paintings, a world in itself, where every article and ornament keeps its unchanging shape, its place and importance, where every animal has its own stylized features, every personality its unerring marks of identification

defined by the ancient texts, religious myths and local tradition. It is a world of myths and gods, but still more it is a world of folk imagination, the reflection of thinking and of the mental scope of millions of Indian peasants, fishermen and craftsmen, their joys, their hardships, binding faith and exacting beauty. So the paintings speak the language of their creators, they give realistic expression, a clear symbol and humorous details. They are familiar to the eye, close to the heart, bringing joy, expressing life."

This commentary by Prof. M. Krasa has its own aptness. In fact, Orissa is the granary house which can provide ample nourishment to the growing genius of Oriya artists. The performances displayed by the painters are the marks of an incomparable architectural dexterity. The super craftsmanship which is exemplified by the folk-painters has an individual dimension of its own, a unique artifice which springs from the profundity of imagination and unfathomable depths of the sensibility. The artistic works in which both earth and heaven walk together, stand in their own solitary grandeur, unrivalled and unsurpassed. The immensity of life and the diversity of the Divine come together and stand in one which deserves a sensible scrutiny and adoration.



Illustrations



1. Sri Jagannath and Balaram on way to Kanchi for helping Gajapati Purusottam Deva, King of Orissa—Sri Jagannath drinking curd from the cow-herdess Manika in exchange of His finger ring.



2. 'Kalki', the tenth incarnation.



3. 'Narasimha', incarnation of Vishnu, killing Hiranyakasipu.

4. Vasudeva carrying the new born baby Sri Krishna to Gopa in heavy rains. The snake with hoods is giving protection to Sri Krishna like an umbrella.





5. Gopala Krishna stealing butter from the houses of the Gopis.



6. Sri Krishna playing the flute.



7. Sri Radha and Sri Krishna in amorous pose.

8. Shri Krishna dancing on the hood of Kaliya snake. ▷





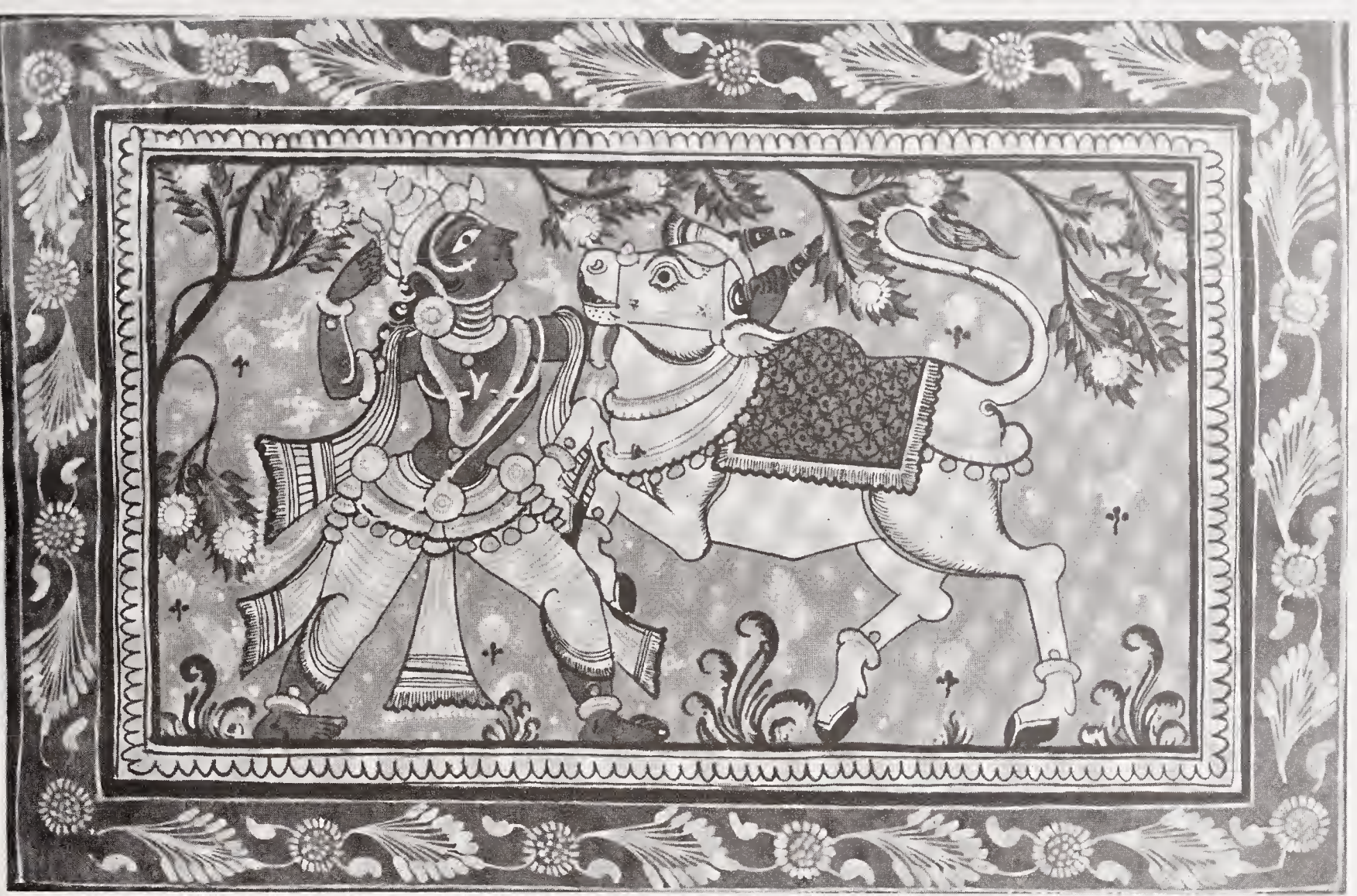
9. *Shri Krishna killing Bakasura (demon in disguise of heron).*

11. *Sri Krishna killing Sandasura (demon in disguise of a bull).*



10. *Sri Krishna killing Aghasura.*

12. *Sri Krishna killing Sakatasura (demon in disguise of a bullock cart).*







14. Gobardhana Dharana (Sri Krishna with the tip of little finger raising the mountain Gobardhana and saving Gopa from the wrath of Indra, the Rain God).



15. Sri Radha and Sri Krishna with Sakhis.

16. Sri Rama, Laxman and Sita crossing the river Ganges-Savar washing the feet of Sri Rama with great respect.



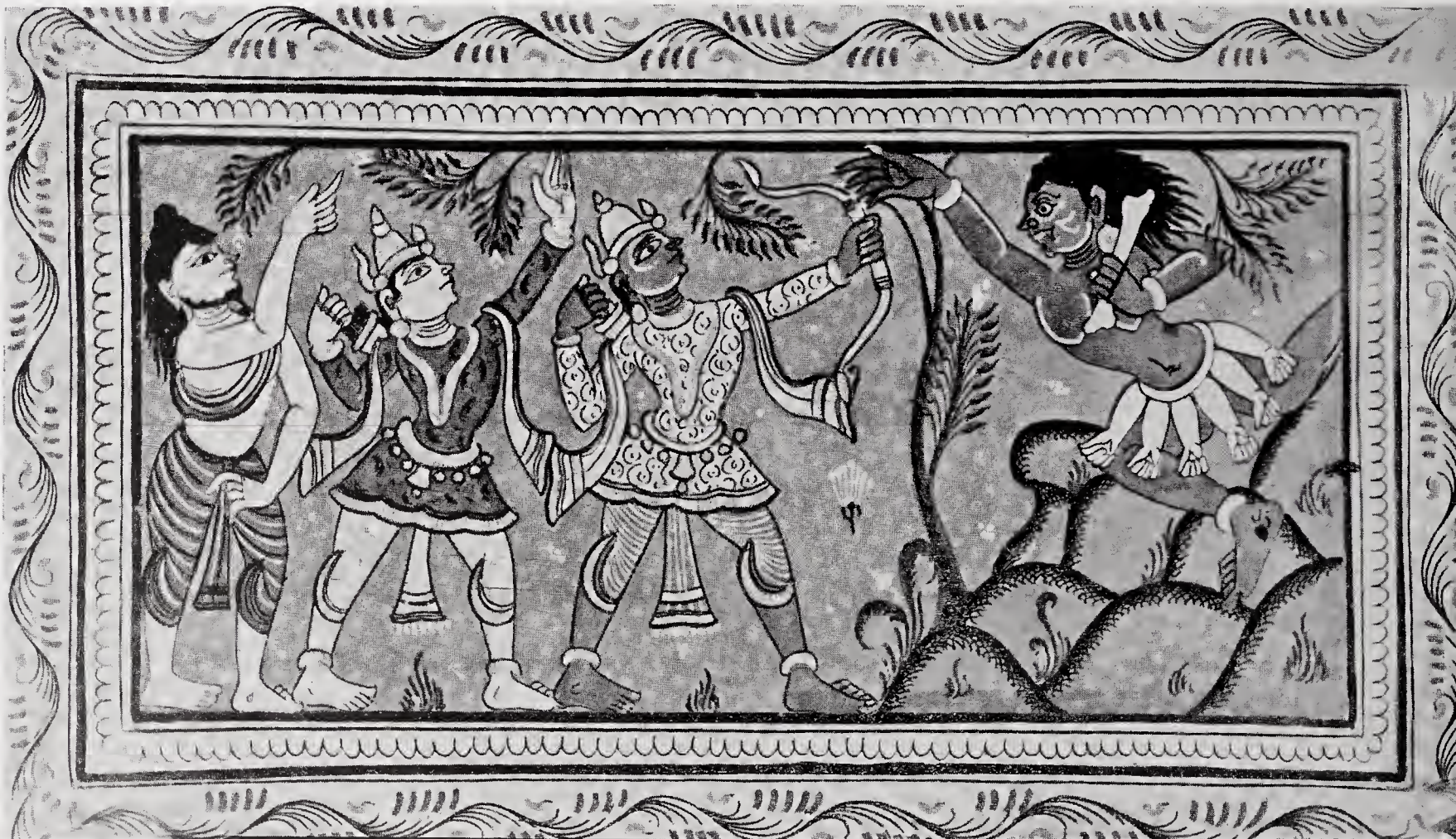


17. Ahalya Udharana. The cursed Ahalya who was lying in the form of stone got back her previous human form by the touch of the feet of Sri Rama. Ahalya praying to Sri Rama.



18. Capturing of the sacrificial horse of Sri Rama by his sons Lava and Kusa.

19. Sri Rama, Laxman and the sage Vasistha. Sri Rama killing Tadaka.





20. Bhima inviting Hanuman for witnessing the Mahabharata War (An episode from Sarala Dasa's Oriya Mahabharata).



21. The dancing Siva.

22. Saraswati,
the Goddess
of Learning.





23. Siva, killing
the demon
Tripurasura.



24. The dancing Ganesh.

25. The son of a Brahmin worshipping Siva to save himself from the hands of Yama, the God of Death.

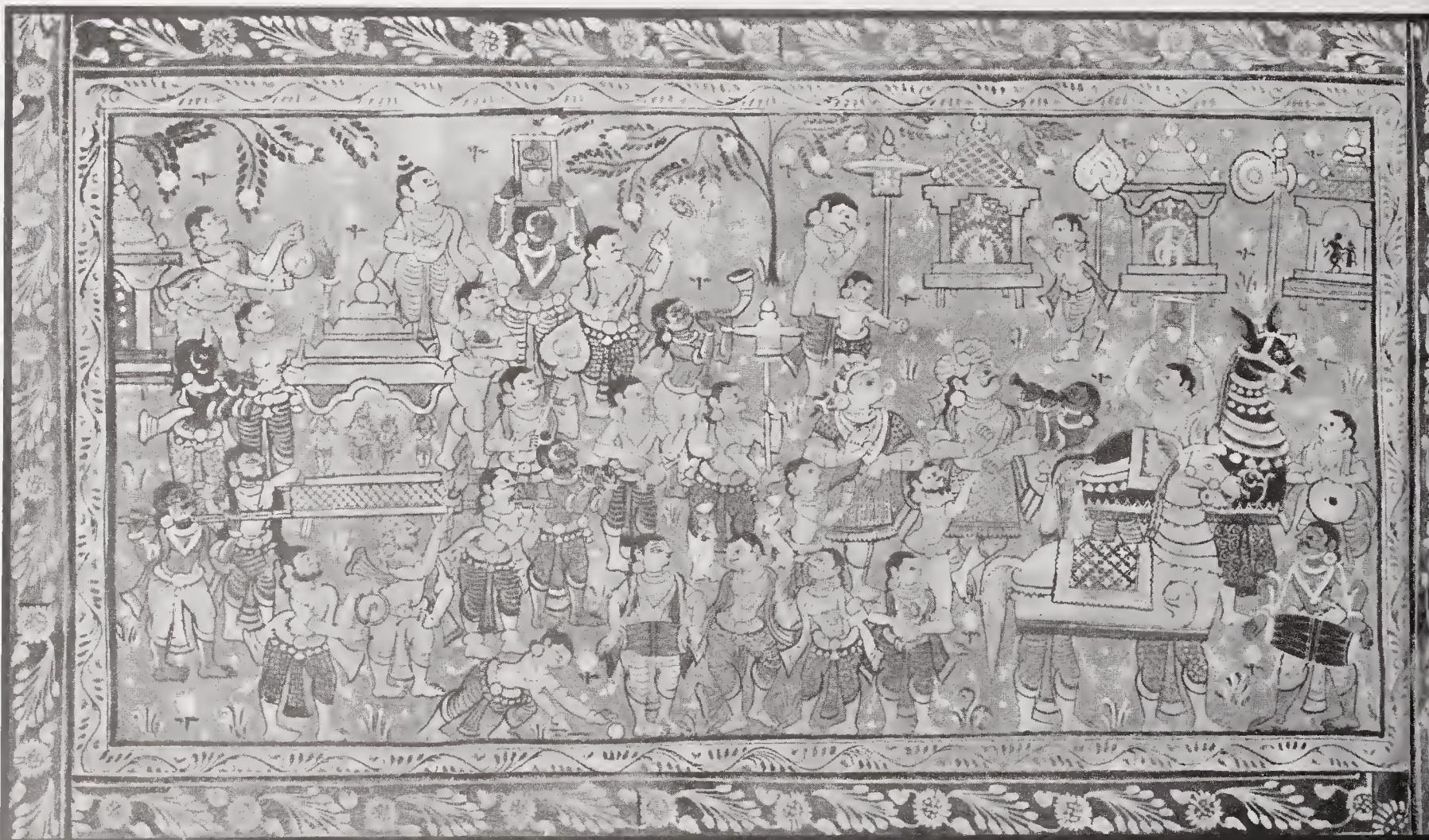




26. The bride and bridegroom procession in an Oriya village.

28. Mahisasuramardini
Durga (Goddess Durga
killing Demon
Mahisasura).

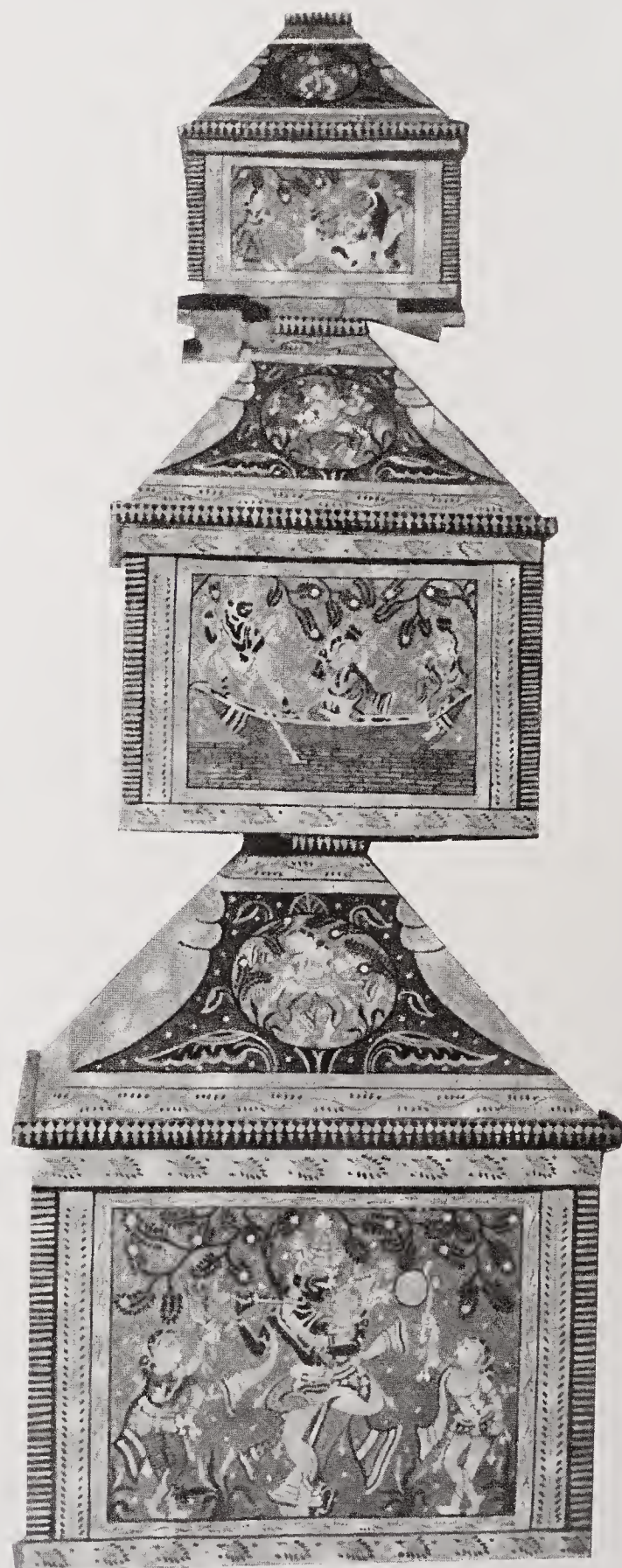
27. The Dola Festival in an Oriya village. The temple like wooden Vimanas with Sri Radha and Sri Krishna are carried on the shoulders by the devotees—The Dolamelan (Congregation of Vimanas)—The dance of wooden-horses—Joyous mood of the village-folk singing and dancing with musical instruments.







29. Panchamukhi (five-headed Ganesh).



30. Chitra-Pedi or Jagat-Pedi (painted dowry-box) generally presented to the bride groom by the people of the bride.



1. Ten incarnations of Vishnu.

2. Ganjpa playing cards from Parlakhemundi.





3. Annabasara Pata-Chitra of Sri Jagannath. (19th Century Pata-painting from Parlakhemundi)



4. Sri Jagannath Pati from Puri.



5. *Anantasayi Vishnu.*



6. *An elephant.*



7. Sri Jagannath conceived as Laxmi Narayan.



8. Kaliya Dalan Vesha of Sri Jagannath. Sri Jagannath conceived as Krishna subjugating the serpent Kaliya, the dreadful viper in river Yamuna.



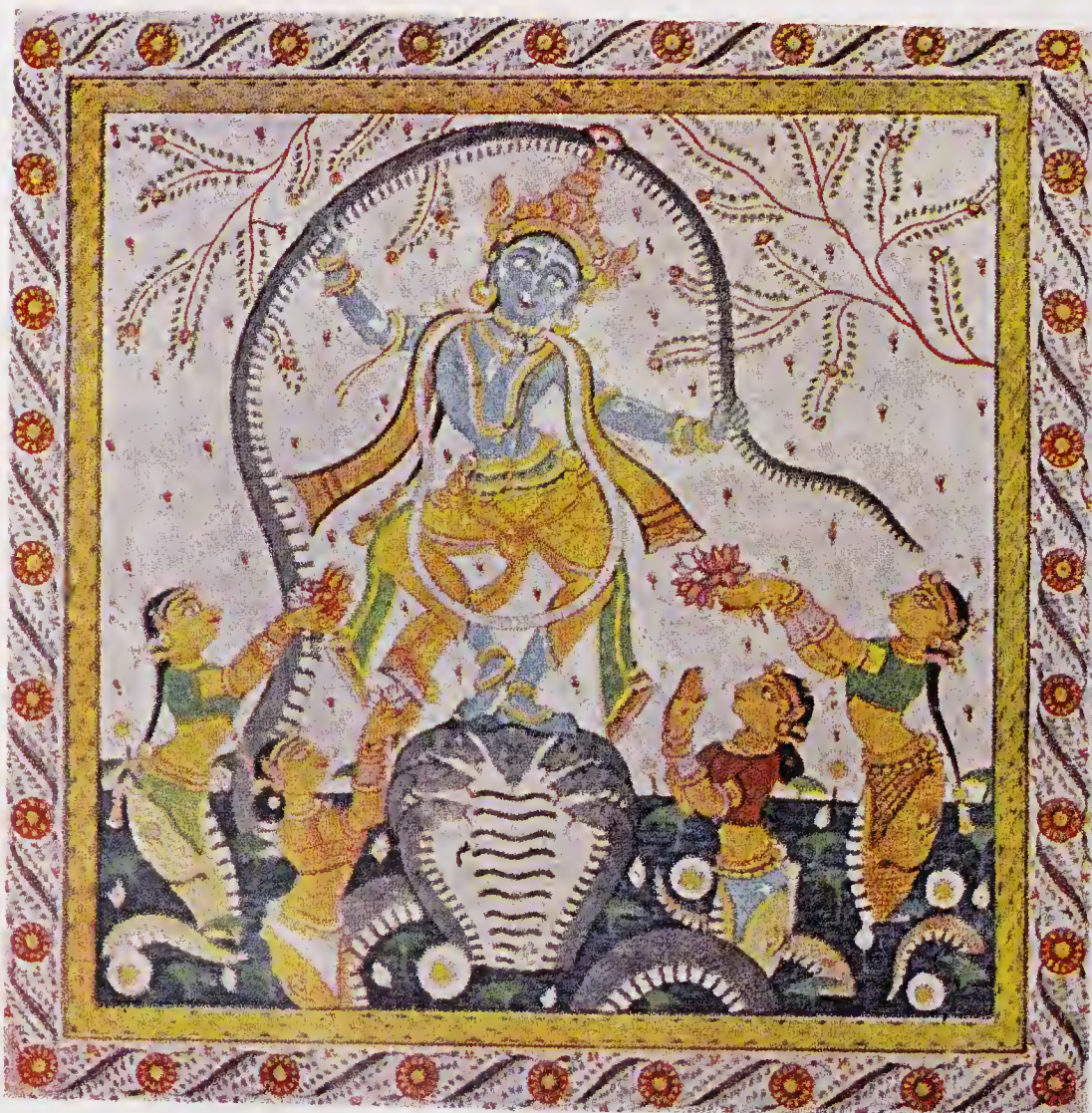
10. Sri Jagannath in the form of Vamana (dwarf)—Vamana Avatara.

9. Sri Jagannath rescuing the elephant from the grip of an alligator—Gajauddharan Vesha of Sri Jagannath.

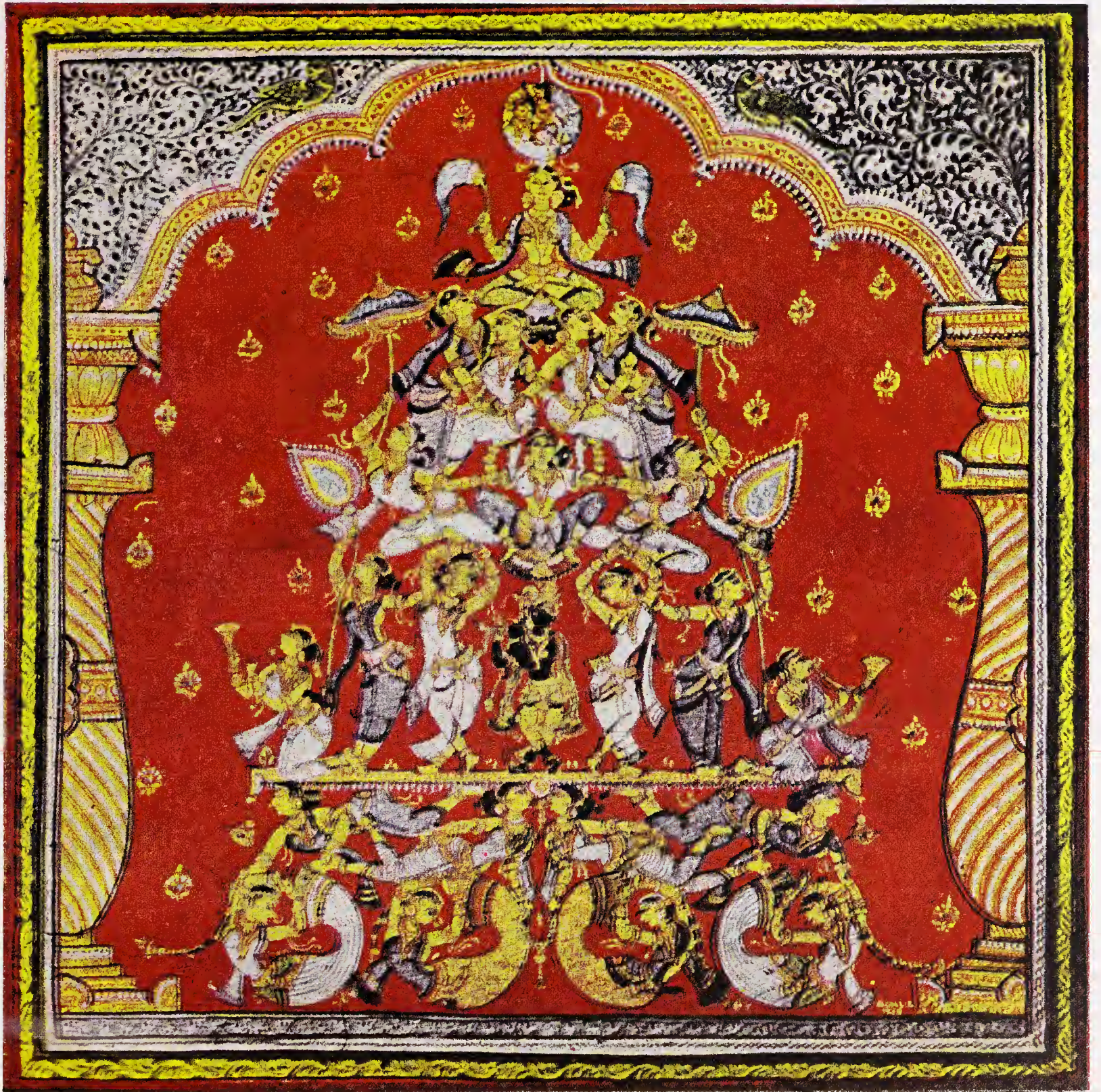
11. Sri Jagannath in the form of Nrusimha killing demon Hiranyakasipu.



12. Navagunjara—Sri Krishna appearing in the form of Navagunjara before Arjuna.



13. Krishna subjugating the serpent Kaliya.



14. Kandarpa-Rath (Cupid's chariot).



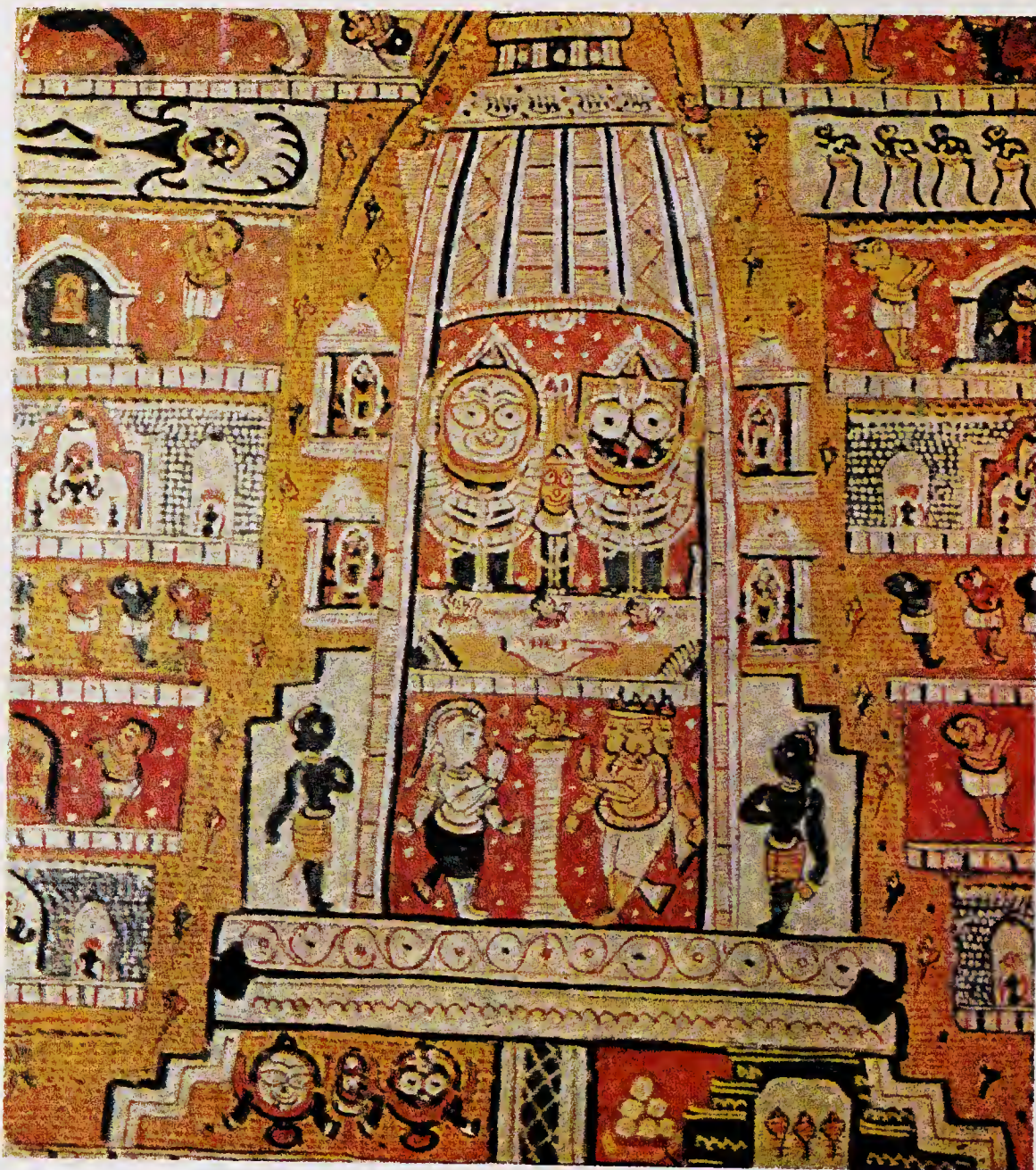
15. Laxmi

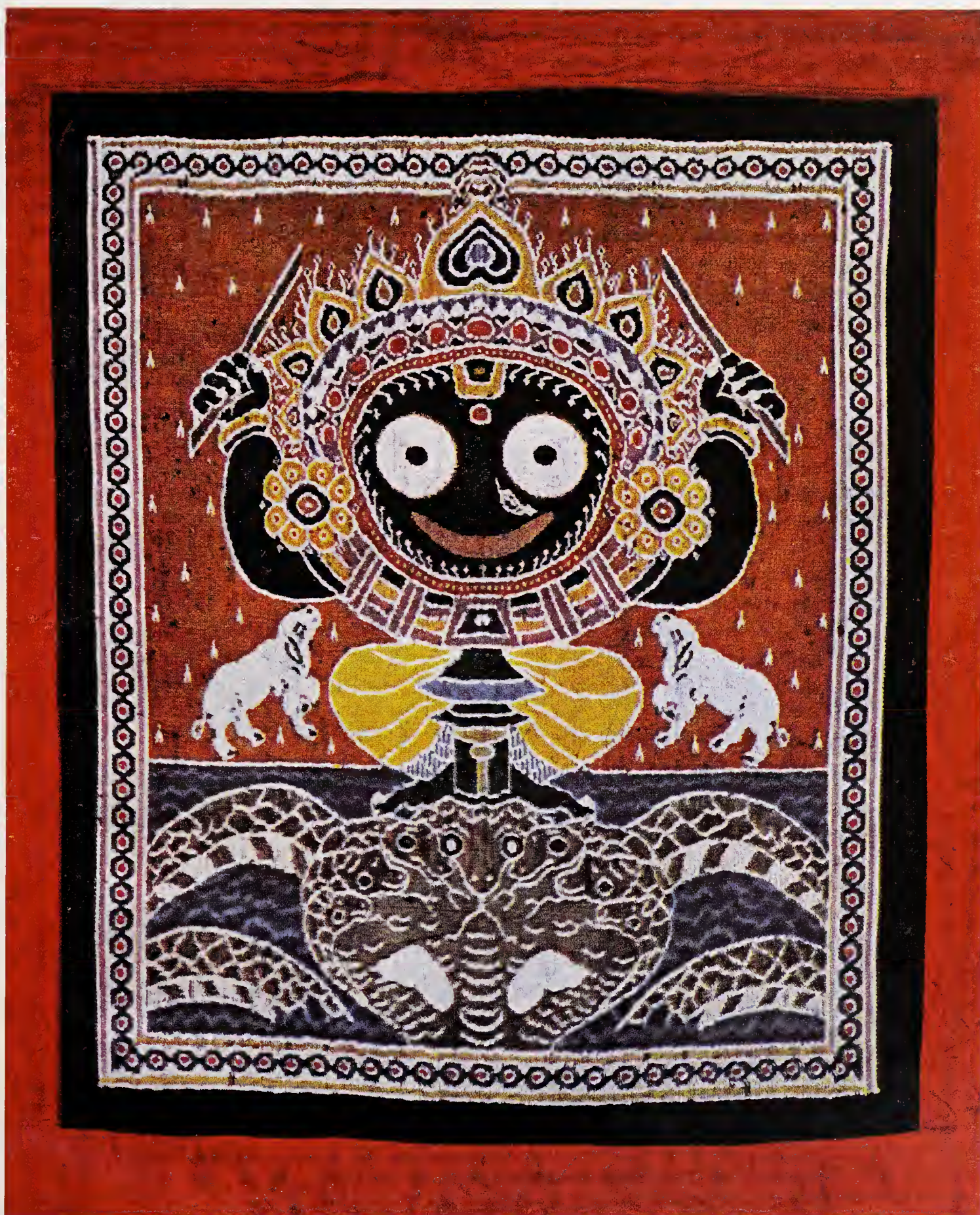


16. Dancing Sadbhujā (with six hands) Gouranga.



17. Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in Sri Jagannath Temple.



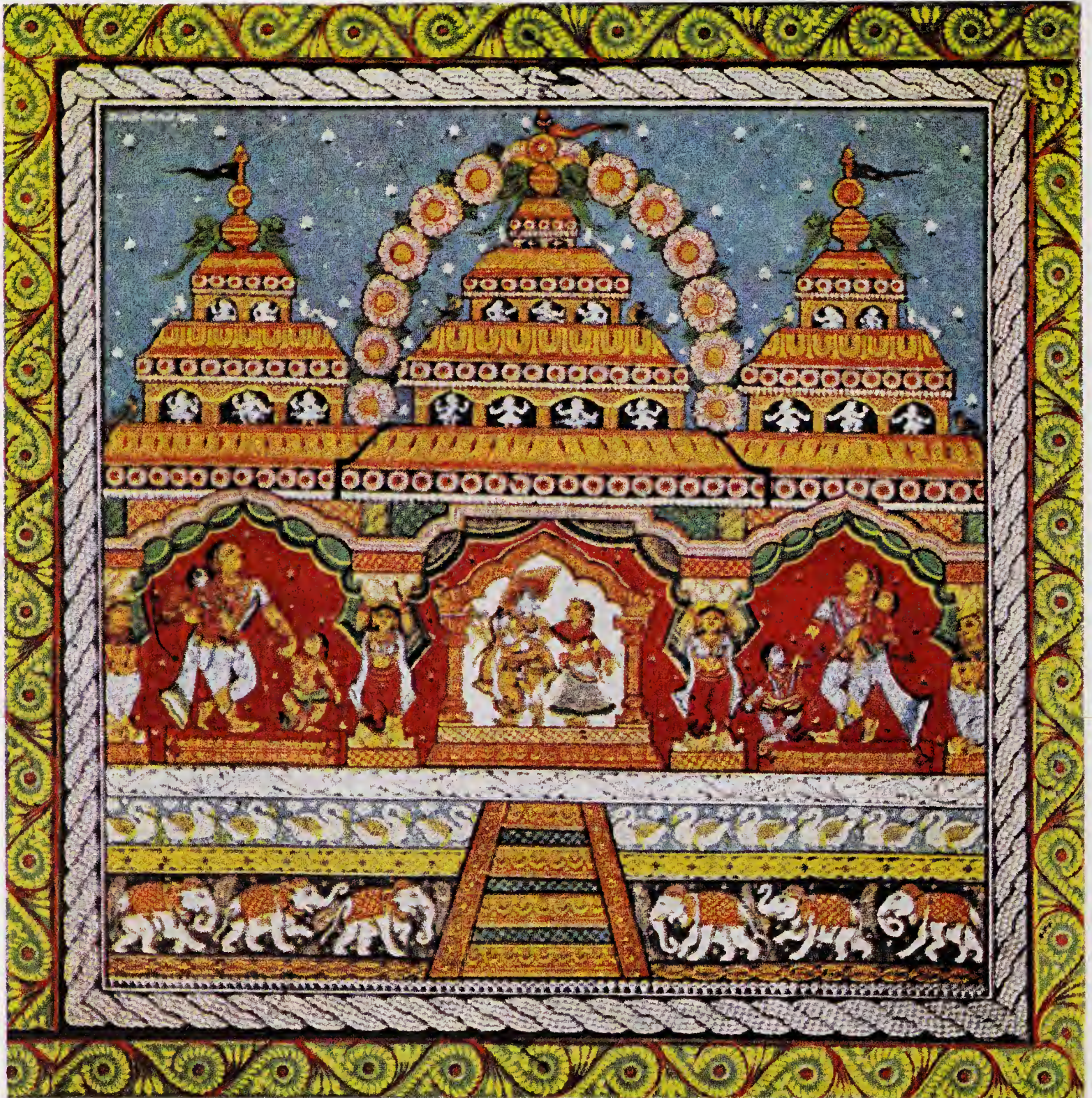


18. Sri Jagannath Pati (made of hand-woven cloth) Collection, Barpalli (Western Orissa) Museum, Department of History, Sambalpur University.





19. Kanchi-Kaveri expedition. (Collection, Department of History, Sambalpur University).



20. Sri Radha Krishna Pati.



Pata paintings or scroll paintings on canvas are a unique contribution of the folk artists of Orissa, bringing together the diverse expression of the divine, along with the intense aspects of human life. The folk tradition of Pata paintings can be traced back to the 8th century A.D. These paintings depict the aesthetic values of Oriya culture, its traditions and the picturesque landscape. The book provides a chronological account of the techniques, forms and styles of these paintings.

The author of the book, Bansidhar Mohanty was an eminent poet, educationist, prominent Oriya critic and essayist. A recipient of Sahitya Academy Award, Mohanty had written a number of books on Oriya culture and literature.



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